

**WHAT WE CLAIM IS:**

1. A method of allocating squelch identifiers in a communication network incorporating BLSR protection, the network comprising a plurality of interconnected network elements, the method comprising:

5 Determining chain links between network elements;

Setting attributes (begin, middle, end) corresponding to the chain links;

Building chains by joining chain links together;

Matching pairs of chains connecting network elements at the ends of chains; and

Allocating squelch identifiers to those network elements interconnected by matching 10 pairs of chains.

2. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the step of building chains comprises joining chain links having matching termination points.

3. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the step of matching pairs of chains comprises searching for chains interconnecting the same two network elements but 15 pointing in opposite directions.

4. A method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein each chain link consists of a network element termination point at each end and an intermediate sub-network connection.

5. A BLSR-protected communication network provided with squelch identifiers 20 by the method claimed in Claim 1.

6. A communication signal transmitted over a BLSR-protected communication network as claimed in Claim 5.

7. A carrier for an algorithm adapted to perform the squelch identifier allocation method as claimed in Claim 1.

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